

Representative Jim Moeller

Report to the 49th District



Immunizations: Washington is getting coverage to more children

Our Evergreen State was recently named the country's most improved state in making sure that children have the vaccines they need. Based on 2003-2006 data gathered by the National Immunization Survey, the award

applauds the number of Washington kids who have completed the vaccination series.

The state Department of Health provides vaccines at no cost to health-care providers for children under 19 years old. Providers might charge an office and/or administrative fee. Parents are urged to use their regular health-care providers for the immunizations. For help finding a health-care provider or an immunization clinic, check the local health agency (www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) in your area. Information is also available by calling the Family Health hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

More information on childhood immunizations is available on the department's Web site: Immunization Program Web site (www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/).



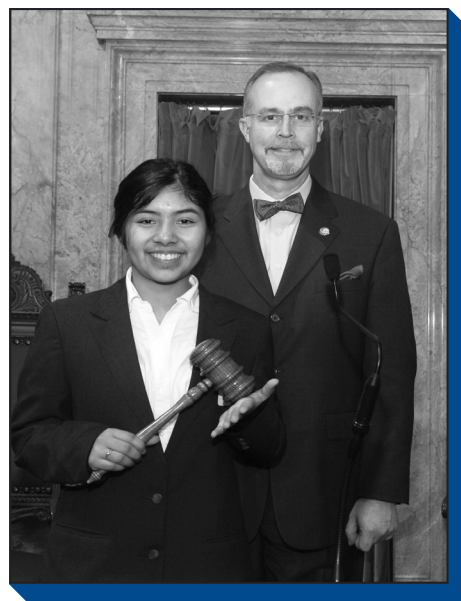
Homeownership: Free counseling is available to answer your tough questions

Just recently launched, the Washington Homeownership Information Hotline and Counseling Program provides free counseling for Washington citizens who are either thinking about buying a home or

want assistance figuring out how to solve their mortgage troubles.

The program was started by the Legislature to help residents learn more about homeownership, mortgages and related matters. If you want some more information, don't hesitate to call the toll-free hotline at 1-877-894-HOME (4663), or click the program's Web site at www.homeownership.wa.gov.

Valerie Aguilar, a daughter of Elizabeth and Aldo Aguilar, served as a Legislative Page this session. Valerie is an eighth-grade home-school student.



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- Health Care & Wellness
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Lauren Shanafelt, a daughter of Robin Shanafelt, served as a Legislative Page this session. Lauren is an eighth-grader at the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics.

Operating budget: A supplemental strategy for state's waning economy

What a difference a year can make!

Nowhere is this maxim any truer than when

the subject is our economy. And that holds true whether we're talking about our national, state, or regional dollars and cents.

When we first wrote our state's biennial operating budget last year, the substantial reserves we set aside were available thanks to a \$1.4-billion surplus. But while our economy has been purring along quite nicely for several years, we've been reminded once more that Washington isn't an island, after all. No, Washington isn't recession-proof.

That very point was clearly hammered home a few months back in a couple of new forecasts. One report was the revenue forecast. It predicted how much tax money we can expect to fund essential state services and programs. The other report was the caseload forecast. It predicted how many students will need a seat in our schools, and how many citizens will qualify for help in our state services and programs.

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How do we stack up?

As I said, our economy has brought us back down to Earth in terms of revenue to pay for services and programs.

The recent forecast said we'd have a projected revenue-shortfall of more than \$520 million. That's the revenue-hole in our biennial budget — *the amount of extra money we'll need to pay for services*

and programs laid out in the 2007-2009 budget that we adopted just a year ago.

But how do we compare with some other states which are also facing tough times? According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, *some of our unfortunate friends elsewhere in the United States are confronting these mammoth budget-holes:*



Virginia	\$1.2 billion.
Arizona	\$1.7 billion.
Illinois	\$1.8 billion.
Florida	\$2 billion.
New Jersey	between \$2.5 and \$3.5 billion.
New York.....	\$4.7 billion.
And the unfortunate “champion,” California.....	\$16 billion.

Toward the end of this year's legislative session, we adopted a supplemental budget to strengthen programs that mean a great deal to Washington families. Without tapping any general tax hikes, we also set \$850 million aside in total reserves.

I believe this budget does the right thing both by taxpayers who are paying the bill — and by citizens among us who are most in need of basic assistance. In addressing the surly challenges in revenue and caseload, the new budget emphasizes these areas of primary concern to citizens:

In education: We maintained funding to work toward all-day kindergarten, as well as better teacher-compensation, additional support for struggling students, and more opportunities for career and technical education in our colleges and universities.

In health care: We initiated funding for small-business subsidies so that more of their low-income employees can get health coverage, and we strengthened funds for programs involving long-term and elder care, mental health, medical “homes,” and family-planning.

In terms of “supplementing” two other state strategies that we also wrote last year, the much smaller transportation and capital budgets are plenty significant in their own right.

The former is primarily a “hold-the-line” budget. Among other things: We retain funding for Interstate 5 maintenance and safety improvements, and we preserve funding for the Vancouver light-industrial-site acquisition.

The supplemental capital budget actually adds three significant items to the construction list that we funded in the 2007 session. The big item is expansion of Vancouver's Share House, which provides emergency housing for folks who are in desperate need of some help. A pair of funding boosts will also help the Vancouver riverfront-redevelopment project, and provide an examination room at the Children's Justice Center.



Tax credit: Working families see some assistance

A new working-families tax credit was approved this session to send a helping hand to hundreds of thousands of Washington citizens.

This new public policy is aimed at assisting lower-income families — especially families with children. Over the decades,

our state has granted many tax benefits that, in theory at least, provide incentives for business. *This one's for people.*

The new policy creates a sales-tax break that amounts to a percentage of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC. Eligible citizens must file a federal income-tax return, receive an EITC, and have lived here in Washington for more than 180 days in the year when the exemption is claimed. Folks must also pay the sales tax in the year when the exemption is claimed.



Civil rights: Washington continues toward overdue public policy

Our state fairly recently – yes, better late than never – embraced the notion that discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation is unwelcome here in these Washington parts. We finally put an end to the days when someone could get away

with uncivil wrongs. And only last year we established the domestic-partnership registry. We finally joined the 21st century.

This year we as Washingtonians should take pride in the establishment of fair, commonsense principles that further strengthen domestic-partnership rights and benefits for same-sex couples — as well as for older, unmarried couples. The new policy will add 174 rights and obligations to the domestic-partnership registry.

Further, our existing domestic-partnership law is changed both in the area of dissolution of a relationship and in the area of reciprocity with other states.

To terminate a partnership, couples in a domestic-partnership commitment will need to follow the same court process as married couples — unless they have neither children nor real estate.

Nothing is more personal and more intimate than the decision between two human beings to commit themselves to one another. Gay and lesbian American citizens over the past few years in fact have used brief windows of opportunity to pledge their lives in union to one another. For several years, gay marriage has been legal in Canada and in many European countries. You don't have to be Casey Jones to see that the train has left the station. This year's legislation simply keeps Washington on track.



Washington-grown: Bill strengthens our students' health and agricultural industry

One of the most significant bills we passed this year unites a pair of objectives that you might not generally associate with one another: the health and well-being of our students and the health and well-being of our farms.

A Washington Grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant Program was created in the legislation. This program will boost the consumption of fresh, nutritious Washington-grown commodities both to improve student-health and to expand the market for locally grown products. We emphasize that our public policies for food-purchasing contracts must live up to these primary duties: 1) Safeguarding our students' health. And 2) Advancing our agricultural industry.



Healthy kids = Good students

Now, perhaps you see the underlying principle in this bill: Kids need to eat healthy in order to have the best shot at learning their lessons! As a matter of fact, we know that schools are increasingly encountering behavioral problems in young people who don't eat well.

It's simple: Well-fed children behave better. They have better school-attendance, and

they pay attention better in class. We don't need a study to prove these ideas (although, yes, there are studies around that do provide plenty of proof).

A very important component in this measure approved in the 2008 session, is the Farmers to Food Banks Pilot Program. Food banks in our state's hardest-hit communities will be able to contract with local farmers to provide fresh fruits, vegetables, and dairy and meat products for distribution to low-income people in their area.